DVS Cabinet Secretary Jamison Herrera *(middle photo below)* presented a plaque, a DVS Cabinet Secretary Coin, and a state flag to former U.S. Army Cpl. Claudio Rael at the conclusion of the agency's annual all-staff training conference on July 24 in Albuquerque.

The Korean War veteran, who would go on to celebrate his 96th birthday two days later, was honored by DVS for his military service for our country, and for helping honor fallen veterans long after his own service ended. The native and long-time resident of Questa in northern Taos County plays a prominent role in hosting a unique Memorial Day display in his hometown.

For the past two decades, Rael and his family graciously allow the use of a large plot of family-owned land for the placement of a thousand eight-foot-tall American Flags in honor of the service and sacrifice of U.S. service members—and especially, our nation's fallen veterans. The five-day-long holiday display continues to draw hundreds of people every year. The family takes care of the plot throughout the year to make sure it will provide a presentable platform for this popular public annual patriotic display.

Family and friends of Rael were invited by DVS for this presentation, which DVS Cabinet Secretary Jamison Herrera said was a special way for the staff to conclude its annual training conference.

"For him to want to continue to serve and honor his fellow veterans speaks volumes about veterans helping veterans—ensuring that there is still a voice for those who are no longer with us," said Secretary Herrera. "We here at DVS, and the rest of New Mexico, truly value you as one of our great citizens and heroes."

Rael, who spent the bulk of his post-service life as a rancher and employee of the former Molycorp mining facility in Questa, was clearly moved. He managed to say a whisper-like "Thank you very much" before being honored with a lengthy standing ovation by DVS staff and his friends and family. Everyone then joined in singing happy birthday to wrap up the presentation and DVS conference.